Chapter 32 | Eternity and Kuri Kinton

YAY YAY
So you're spending New Year's in Hokkaido?
Yup.

Last time we went back to my parents' house.
So this time...
....we were invited...
...to my wife's parents' home.

I heard Hokkaido's super cold!
I bought a light blue jacket!
Wow...
Neat! I bet that's really warm.
Did you get your airplane tickets?
Actually, it turns out they're a bit cheaper on the 31st and the 1st!
Hokkaido, huh? There's so much tasty stuff there.
Crab, hokke mackerel, lamb, soup curry...
Well, we aren't staying for very long so I don't think we'll be able to eat all that.
As for food, they're making osechi* for us, they said.
Osechi?
Do you like osechi, Tsumugi-chan?
*Japanese New Year's Food
...
Yeah.
Not too much, maybe.
Not too much, huh?
Not too much, I guess.
Oh!
Mochi! I do like mochi!
You like rolled omelets too, right?

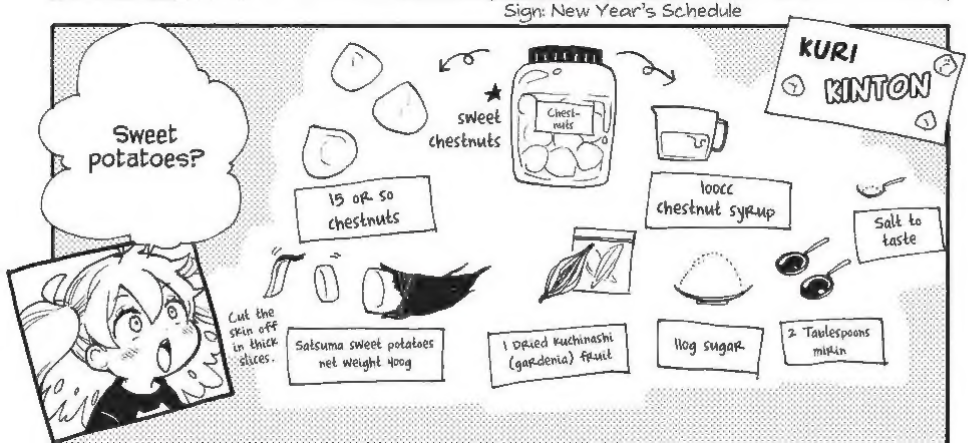
*Candied chestnuts with sweet potatoes

An eternity...
Yup yup
I ate it for an eternity last New Year's.
It's sweet, and chestnut-y and sweet and yummy...
That's the kind of osechi that's popular with kids, isn't it?

Thank you very much.
I bet they'd love it.
Oh, that's a great idea.
...can I use it as a gift?
If I make one...
Hey, hey!
We do. The plane leaves at three, so if we're done by noon or so...

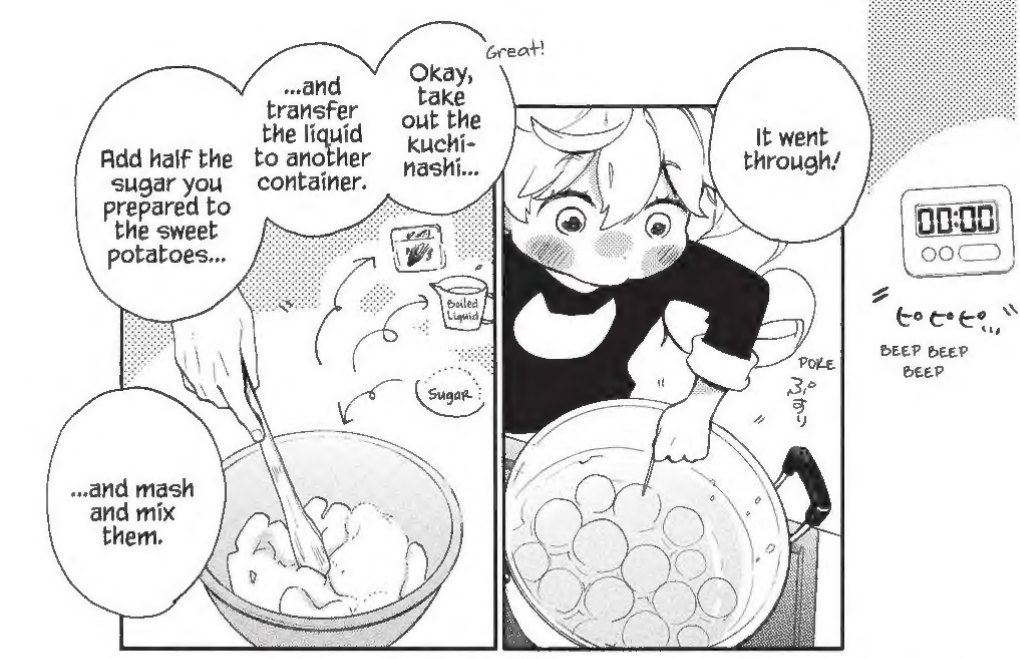
AND SO...

Sign: New Year's Schedule



...some sweet potatoes that've been soaked in water overnight!
And these are...
Like on TV!
Pretty smart.
...so we'll use sweet potato paste for the gooey sweet part on the outside.
If you just use chestnuts, it gets expensive...
To give the sweet potatoes a lustrous, pretty color...
They're pretty big.
...we'll use kuchinashi fruit.
We call the step of throwing the water out "yudekobosu."
Okay!
Change out the water, and bring it to a boil. Once it boils, toss the water out.
I put little dried sardines in them when I make broth!
Tea bags sure are handy.
This part is also called the spine of the knife.
Put it in a tea bag and crack it open with the blunt edge of the knife.
Ooh!
I love tea bags too...!

FLINCH
That's creepy.
Boil the sacrificial yam!
Boil, boil!
Hurry... up n'... boil!
CLUB
Put the tea bag and the sweet potatoes in a pot and boil them for fifteen minutes,
until you can poke a toothpick straight through them!
CLUB
You, too!
haha
Entrance exams are coming up next year, right?
That's right!
She'll be in elementary school next year.
Her vocabulary has expanded since the last time I saw her.
Kids really do grow up fast!
Wow...
Elementary school, huh? She really is growing up fast.
S-Sorry... Don't worry about it too much.
No. I just... ...hadn't been thinking about it at all.
What are exams...?
GULP

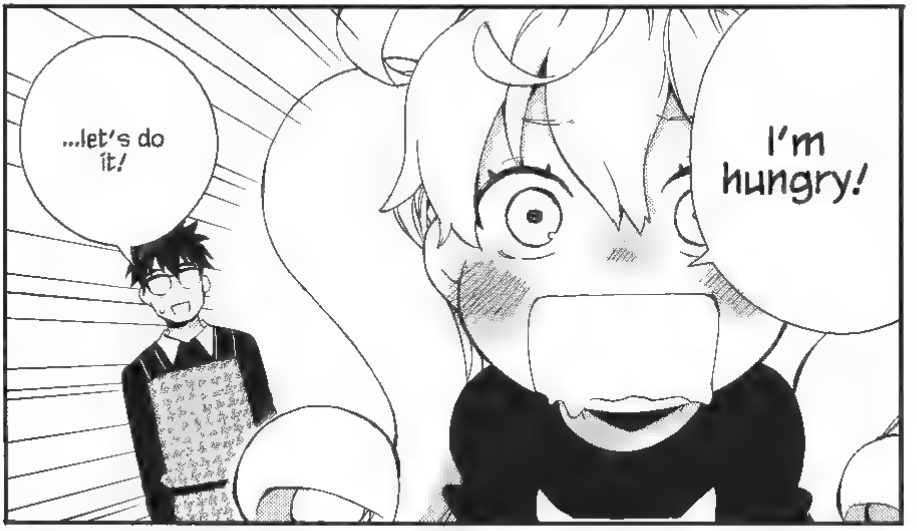

Great!
Okay, take out the kuchi-nashi...
...and transfer the liquid to another container.
Add half the sugar you prepared to the sweet potatoes...
Boiled Liquid
Sugar
...and mash and mix them.
It went through!
POKE
00:00
BEEP BEEP BEEP

MOOSH MOOSH MOOSH
Let me!
Now put it through a strainer.
STIR STIR STIR
Now, work it into a paste!

Once it's bubbling, add in the chestnuts and salt...
Turn on the heat and work it some more.
Put the mixture back in the pot and add the rest of the sugar, the chestnut syrup...
...the mirin, and the boiled liquid, and stir.
It's done?!
Once it cools down, okay?
So before that...
It gets a little less sweet once it's cooled...
Yay! Yay!
Taste-test!
They look like they're having so much fun...

NOM
It's so...
...sweet!!
It's sweet!
It's very good!
It's sweet, but...
...it's not sticky. It slides right down your throat.
It's delicious.
SLURP SLURP
Good girl!
I'm proud of you, Tsumugi!
NNNG!
Or there won't be any left for Grandma and Granpda!
I won't do it!
But...
I want... more...

Then why don't we make another dish?
Let's make a bunch and have lunch together, too.
Yes, we're still okay.
Do you still have time?
Lunch?!

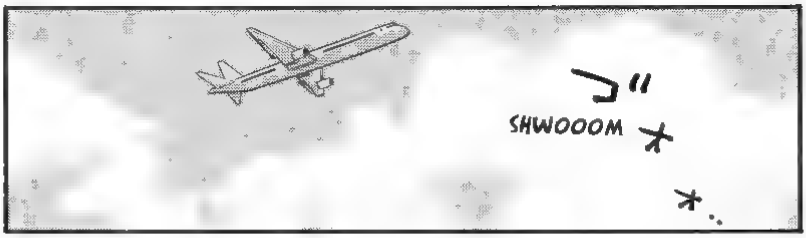

...let's do it!
I'm hungry!

FIDGET FIDGET
...
Oh, we need to get going.
Okay!
Yay! Meat!
I'm gonna give these to Grandma and Grandpa, too!
TIE TIE
STUFFED

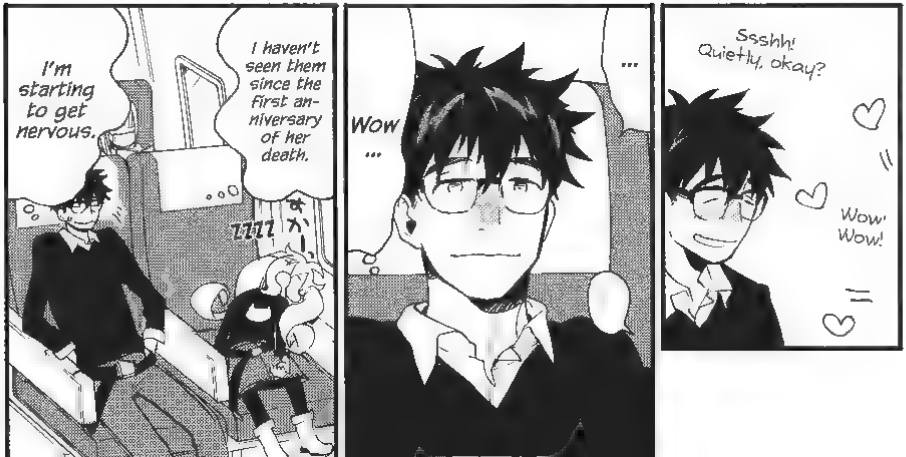
We made beef
Hachiman-maki.
*Boiled burdock root with meat wrapped around it
Perfect for osechi!

Thank you so much.
Have a nice new year!
Take care.
POP
Um...
Our meals together...
...were a lot of fun this year!
I hope...
...we can keep doing them next year!

See you next year!
Me, too!


SHWOOOM

An air-plane!
Wow ...

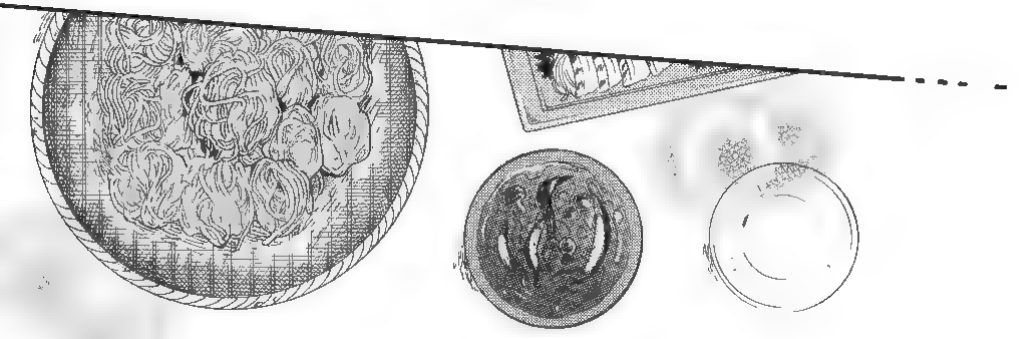

I'm starting to get nervous.
I haven't seen them since the first anniversary of her death.
ZZZZ
Wow ...
...
Sssshh! Quietly, okay?
Wow, Wow!

Tsu-mugi-chan!
Um... They said they'd come to get us.
Where are they?
Welcome.
10
It's snow!
Thanks for hav-ing us.
We're here!
hee hee hee hee

THWOOOM
So just consider this Christmas and New Year's combined.
We weren't sure what to get...
Oh!
Um... sorry...
You didn't have to get all these!
You can have them all!
Y-you...
Just one?
Do I only get one?
ほわぁ～
GLOOOOOW...
Out of all these?
No, no! See how happy Tsumugi is?
But...
See? I told you it would cause trouble.
Yeah!

...
Thank you!

I brought what I made for you, too!
But not until tomorrow! Eat it tomorrow!
It's still a secret, okay?
Wow
I wonder what it is?
Put it in the fridge, okay?

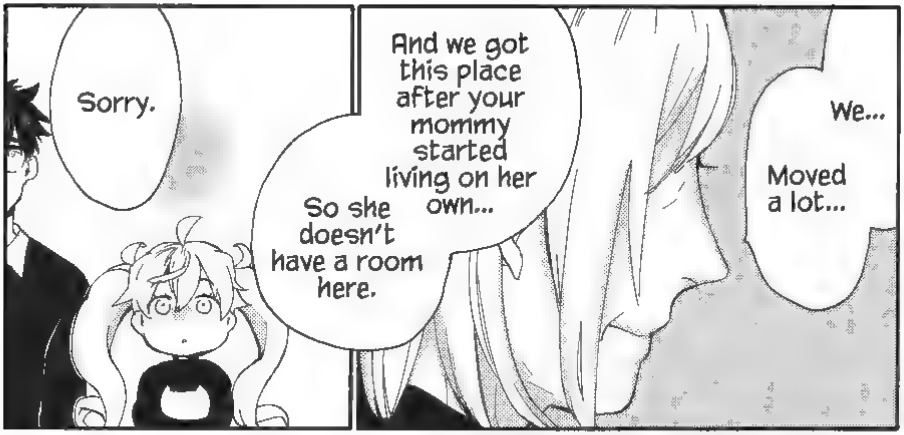


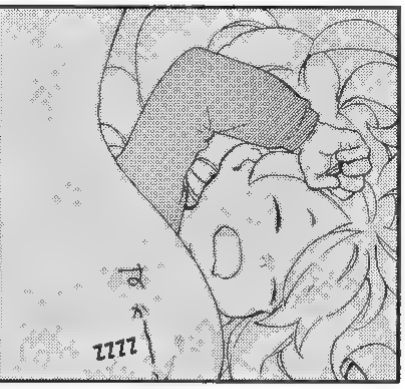
Oh, thank you.
You've got mushrooms and eggplants in the dipping sauce. It's really good!
Do you fry them before you put them in?
Thank goodness ...
Soba! I love soba!
Want to try it when we get back?
Sounds great!
Then add soy sauce and sake for flavoring.
You can add mirin too!
That's right. Once they start to become transparent, you add the broth.
Huh!
CLINK
.....
SLURP
CLINK
Oh, thanks.
No, um...
You must be doing a good job at home, aren't you?
That's great.

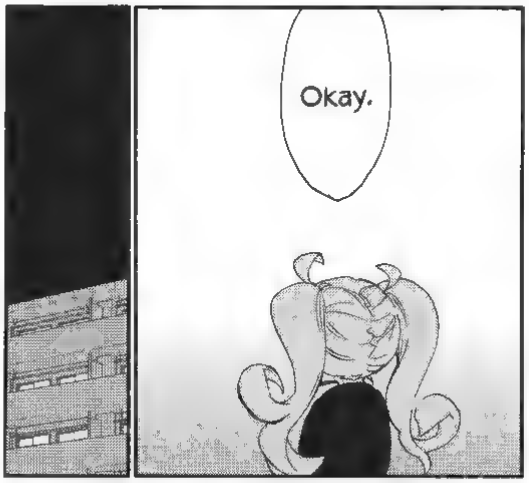
It's delicious!
AAAH!
ほ
WHEW
I'm glad you like it.
There aren't a lot of foods you don't eat, are there?
Not really.
I even ate a bug a while ago!
CRUNCH CRUNCH
!?

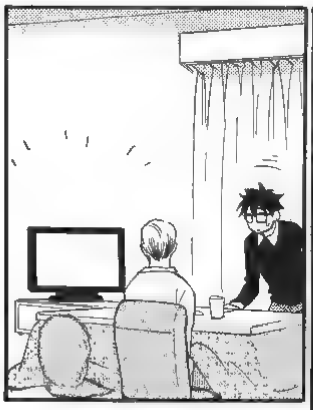
Locusts! She means tsukudani locusts!
Oh...
Aha...
WHEW...?
I ate them when I was at Granny's house!
Oh!

I saw Daddy's at Grandma and Grandpa's house!
That's right! I wanna see an album!
Can I see Mommy's?
What about her room? Does Mommy have a room?
'kay!
I'll go find it.
I wonder where I put that album...
...


Sorry.
And we got this place after your mommy started living on her own...
So she doesn't have a room here.
We...
Moved a lot...


ZZZZ

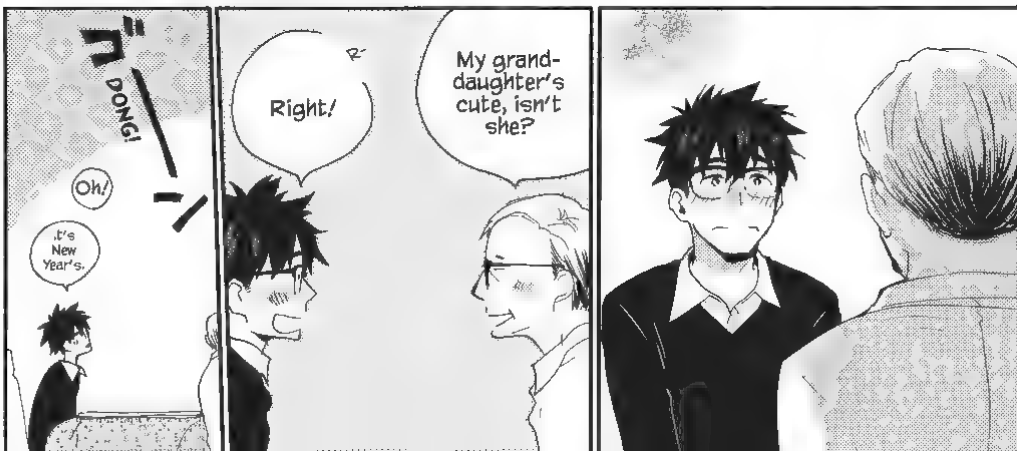

Okay.



ZSSSH
It's fine. Go talk to him.
I can wash those.

VRRM...
...
Oh.
Thanks.

...for coming.
Thanks ...


DONG!
Oh!
It's New Year's.
Right!
My grand-daughter's cute, isn't she?

WIDE AWAKE
ニパキーン
Oh!
She's up.
SLAM!
ゴーン
GONG
BLINK
HUH?
I wanna go to the shrine.
Come to think of it...
She did sleep all the way on the plane.
らんらん
EXCITE-MENT!
It's our first visit of the year!
I did it last year!
It's okay!
Tsumugi-chan, it's the middle of the night!
It's cold out!

YAY!
You want to go for just a little?
Well... There is a shrine in the neighborhood.
MURMUR
MURMUR
MURMUR
So many people!
HAAAFF...
You cold?
Run in place!
You might warm up if you run!
HUFF
Like this?!
HUFF
Like this?!
PITTER PATTER
PITTER PATTER

RUB RUB
HEH!
We're here to say hello.
We're not really here to make a wish...
What'cha gonna wish for?
This is the shrine for our neighborhood...
...so we're asking it to watch over us again this year.
Hmm...
I'm not from the neighborhood, so I'll ask it to watch over you guys, okay?
Thanks.

Let's go.
'kay.
PRAYING
Oh, then I'll get some sake for tomorrow at the convenience store.
Meet you at the exit.
Okay!
We'll be right back.
Okay.
Potty!
...

Saicomart
VROOOM
HOOOHK

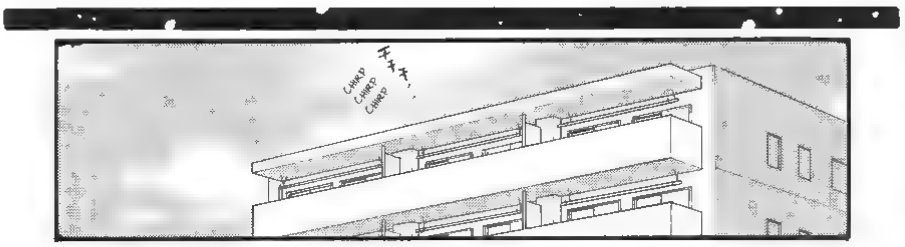
Mom-my!
Watch out!!
VROOOM

HEY!
Tsu-
mu-
It's dangerous!!
Dashing out like that...
JOG
JOG
I-
I'm sorry!
You ought to know better!
Good-ness!

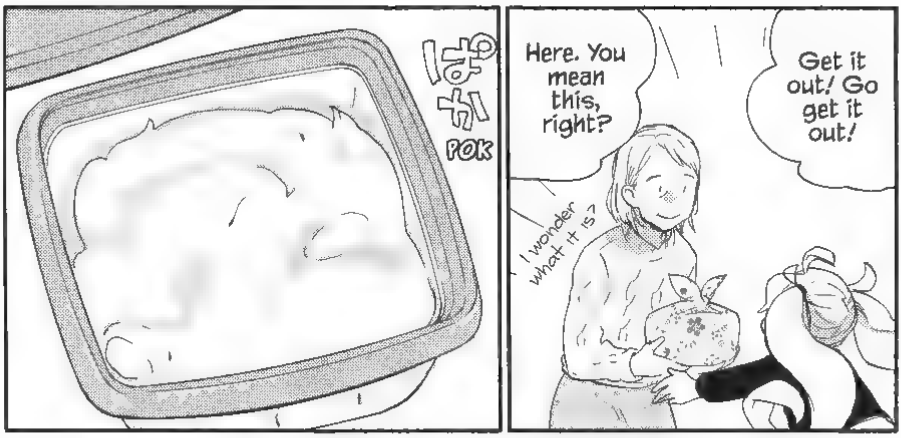
I thought you were Mommy.
Granny, you look like Mommy, don't you?

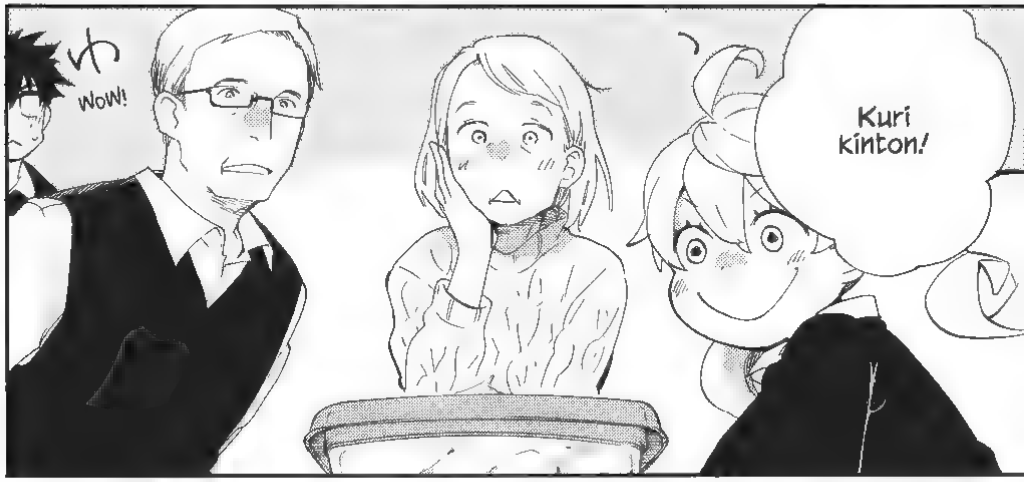
...

Tsumugi...
You're just like your mommy.


CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP

Morning!
Happy...
...New Year's!
Yup, you too.
We made reservations at a department store.
Oh...
Wow! Osechi in a box!


ぽか
POK
Here. You mean this, right?
Get it out! Go get it out!
I wonder what it is?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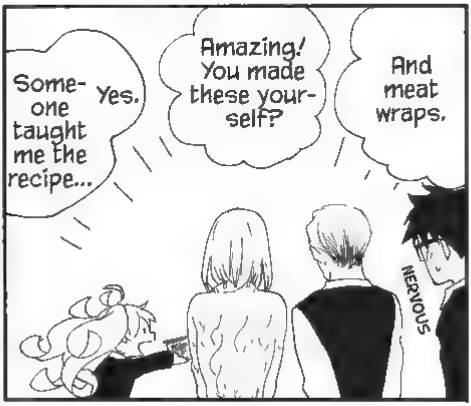
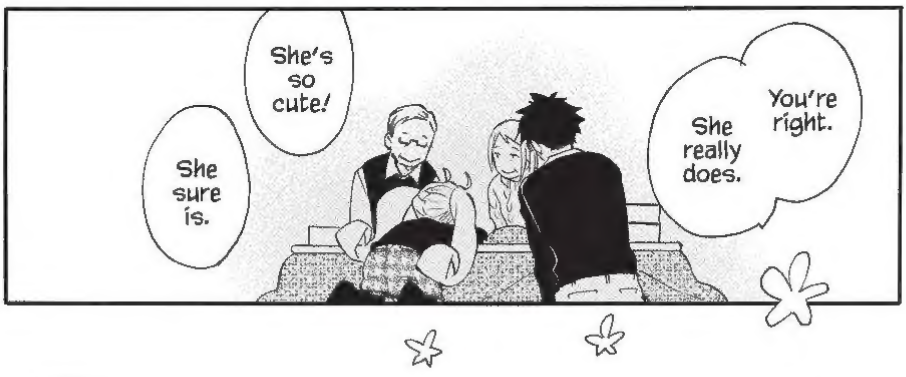
WOW!
Kuri kinton!

That's great!
I got to use a wooden spatula!
I strained them, too!
I'll try some.


Some-one taught me the recipe...
Yes.
Amazing! You made these your-self?
And meat wraps.
NERVOUS

They're good!
Yeah!
Right?
I see...
Then next year...
I'm sure you could. I was able to do it.
I'm actually not that good at cooking.
I wonder if I could make them.
Maybe I'll try it myself.
BUSH
Then trade me your recipe for dipping sauce from yesterday.
Huh? If you really want...
BUSH

FLIP
I almost forgot!
TROT
Oh, right!
TROT
Wow, you did have one!
A photo album!
ドキドキ
BA-DUM BA-DUM
Ssshh!
Wow, even Daddy's never seen this picture before.
Yes ...
I looked around and found it.



To be continued...